



Clark County, Washington **Endangered Species Act Information**

Watching after our watersheds



Some people believe that if they don't live along a stream or river, then what they do won't have an effect on salmon. Not true! The fact is, the water quality of a stream or river is often influenced by activities that take place miles away. That's because of how water drains within a watershed.

What is a watershed?

A watershed is any area of land from which water drains to a common point, such as a river, pond, stream, or lake. Topographic features such as ridge tops often create natural boundaries to a watershed. Small watersheds are contained within larger ones. A watershed can be as big as all the land draining into the Columbia River, or as small as 20 acres draining to a pond.

Pollutant sources

Most of the pollution entering Clark County's river and waterways are from nonpoint sources. This means the pollution does not come from a specific source, such as a factory, but originates over a broad area within the watershed. Water running over lawns, gardens, streets, and rooftops can carry nutrients, sediment, oil, grease, and heavy metals to streams, rivers, and waterways, either directly in runoff or through a tributary stream, drainage system, or groundwater. Construction, agriculture, and forestry sites can contribute significant quantities of sediments and nutrients, especially during rainstorms.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) - What you can do at home

Even if you don't live near the river, your actions can affect it. Before beginning any activity, consider its potential to degrade our waterways. Try to reduce stream pollution and protect water quality through appropriate landscaping, reduced use of fertilizers and pesticides, proper maintenance of septic systems, and judicious use of household products. Here are some tips to help keep our water clean and improve conditions for salmon:

- *Never dump anything down a storm drain* - storm drains lead to our streams and rivers.
- *Wash your car on grass* where soapy water and dirt can be absorbed. Use phosphorus free, non-toxic soap. Better yet, take your car to automatic car washes that recycle the water and properly dispose of detergents.

- *Sweep sidewalks and driveways* instead of hosing them down. Put the sweepings in the garbage to keep pollutants and litter out of waterways.
- *If you pressure wash*, figure out how to keep paint flakes, grease, and other pollutants from washing into storm drains, ditches, or waterways.
- *Avoid hazardous household products* such as chlorine bleach or drain cleaner. If you must use them, follow manufacturers' directions and dispose of them properly.
- *Store chemicals* where there's no chance for them to pollute surface or groundwater.
- *Recycle motor oil, antifreeze, and household hazardous wastes* at collection centers and at special collection events.
- *Maintain vehicles* and fix leaks.
- *Cover garbage cans and dumpsters* to keep stormwater from leaching contaminants from the trash.
- *Compost yard debris and kitchen scraps*. Leaves can clog storm drains. When yard debris washes into streams and wetlands, the excess decaying material can reduce the dissolved oxygen needed by aquatic life.
- *Have your septic system inspected* and the tank pumped every three to five years. Failing septic tanks can be a significant source of pollution.
- *Avoid or limit use of pesticides and fertilizers*. If you use them, use them correctly. Better yet, remove weeds by hand and use natural compost or organic fertilizer for healthier plants.
- *Plant native plants*. They are resistant to pests and acclimated to local growing conditions.
- *For paths and driveways*, use natural ground cover or porous materials such as gravel or bark instead of asphalt and concrete.

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- *Ensure that roof runoff soaks into the ground.* Do not pipe to ravines or streams as it causes erosion.
- *Minimize steep slope and bank erosion* by retaining trees and shrubs.
- *Don't allow pet or animal waste to wash from your property.* Fence livestock away from waterways and cover manure piles.
- *Use erosion control practices after disturbing a large area of soil.* Mulch or groundcover can reduce the amount of sediment from stormwater runoff.

If you live by the lake or a stream:

- *Leave a plant buffer along stream banks and shorelines* to avoid excess runoff and erosion. Plant native plants if the streambank needs revegetating.
- *Remove invasive plants*, such as blackberries and English ivy, which can force out native plants and kill trees.
- *Leave logs, boulders, and branches in the stream.* They form pools and riffles that provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife.
- *Fence livestock from stream.* They can trample streambanks and kill the plants, resulting in erosion.

For information about salmon recovery in Clark County, contact the Clark County Endangered Species Program at (360)397-2022 or www.saveoursalmon.com.

How businesses can help control stormwater pollution

Clark County's Stormwater Pollution Control manual was created to help businesses comply with the county's Water Quality Ordinance, adopted to protect streams and salmon habitat from stormwater runoff. The ordinance requires businesses and government agencies to use good housekeeping practices to prevent pollutants such as spilled fuel, dirty wash water, and pesticides from mixing with stormwater that runs into streams, lakes, and groundwater. For more information, contact Cary Armstrong at (360) 397-6118 ext. 4392. You can view the manual on the county's web site at www.clark.wa.gov/pubworks/BMPman.pdf.



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